

Submission to the TGA regarding the rescheduling of Alkyl Nitrites

In this submission I wish to address the following issue:

- Benefits of use of the substance
- The purpose for which the substance is used, and the extent

I am a gay male who has used Alkyl Nitrates (poppers) for a period of approximately 4 years.

By nature I am a 'bottom' (anally receiver). Although I am active in a range of sexual activities I regard anal sex as being my primary form of sexual enjoyment.

I first attempted to receive anal penetration approximately 20 years ago. This attempt, and the many occasions after that in which I tried anal sex, were very painful. Many of these attempts were unsuccessful as the pain was too great to continue. Almost all attempts, successful or otherwise, resulting in bleeding. I also experienced anal fissures from one of these attempts. The fissures had to be treated by an operation which, although successfully treating the fissures, did not eliminate the pain.

I was aware of the widespread use of poppers in the gay community and many of my partners had used poppers during sexual sessions. For many years I refused to use them because I thought the purpose of poppers was to achieve a "high" and I was not seeking an artificial high. I was also very reluctant to inhale from a bottle marked "not for inhalation".

About 4 years ago I began regular meetings with a doctor (of medicine). We had a number of sexual encounters but not anal sex. When I explained to him why I would not let him anally penetrate me, he encouraged me to try poppers as a way of relaxing my sphincter (thereby reducing the pain and chaffing). The difference was incredible – I had no pain and no bleeding.

I have used poppers since then every time I have anal sex (on average around twice a week). I do not use poppers at any other time. The longest period I have gone without using them in that time is around 6 weeks. I have not experienced any cravings during periods of non-use. Nor has the amount of use (around 1 sniff every 3 minutes) increased over time.

The only side effect I have experienced in that time is a slight headache on a couple of occasions.

From a personal point of view I urge the TGA not to make the reclassification. If poppers are rescheduled then I am faced with a terrible choice:

- Forgo the ability to express myself sexually in the way that is most important to me
- Engage in criminal behaviour (the purchase, use and possession of a prohibited drug)

In my entire life I have never purchased, used or possessed an illegal drug nor have I had a desire to do so. Reclassification would force me to reconsider that position.